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**AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH COUNCIL OF NIGERIA (ARCN)**



## JOURNAL OF APPLIED AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

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# JOURNAL OF APPLIED AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

| Contents                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Volume 5, Number 2, 2013 | Page |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------|
| Agricultural Economics and Extension                                                                                                                                                                                         |                          | 1    |
| Accuracy of Extension Professionals' and Farmers' Perceptions of Privatization and Commercialization of Agricultural Extension Services<br><i>Ajiz, P. C.</i>                                                                |                          | 3    |
| Microcredit and Food Crops Production in Selected Local Government Areas of Ogun State: A Restricted Normalised Profit Function Analysis<br><i>Tijani, I. A., Raji, M. A. Y., Momoh, S., Dipeolu, A. O. and I. A. Ayinde</i> |                          | 11   |
| Analysis of Effective Prices of Kosai in Nigeria and Niger, West Africa<br><i>Mohammed, A. B., Musa, S. A. and Z. Abdu</i>                                                                                                   |                          | 21   |
| Motivational Factors Affecting Level of Job Satisfaction among Village Extension Workers of Delta State Agricultural Development Programme, Nigeria<br><i>Ofoeku, A. U.</i>                                                  |                          | 31   |
| Resource Use Efficiency of Cassava-Based Farmers in Ogun and Oyo States, Nigeria<br><i>Obayelu, A. E., Afolami, C. A. and M. U. Agbonlahor</i>                                                                               |                          | 39   |
| Preliminary Study of Market Potentials of Edible Frogs in Nigeria<br><i>Nwabeze, G. O. and A. N. Okaeme</i>                                                                                                                  |                          | 55   |
| Impact of Anambra State Tractor and Equipment Hiring Scheme on Mechanization of Rice Production in Anambra State Nigeria: An Appraisal<br><i>Umejulu, I. C. E., Okoronkwo, J. C., Ngini, J. O. and E. C. Chukwuma</i>        |                          | 61   |
| Factors Associated with Job Performance of Extension Agents in Kwara State, Nigeria<br><i>Akangbe, J. A., Omotesho, K. F. and O. K. Asaju</i>                                                                                |                          | 73   |
| A Comparative Analysis of Costs and Returns for Small Ruminants Marketing in Katsina State<br><i>Isa, H. K., Mohammed, A. B., Musa, S. A. and Z. Abdu</i>                                                                    |                          | 81   |
| Farmers' Perception of Problems Influencing Maize Storage in Abuja, Nigeria<br><i>Ajah, J. and J. N. Nmadu</i>                                                                                                               |                          | 89   |
| Extension Agents' Assessment of the Challenges of Agricultural Extension Practice for Nomadic Farmers in Northern Nigeria<br><i>Bidoli, T. D., Kezi, D. M., Auta, S. J., Isa, A. G. and B. M. Shehu</i>                      |                          | 95   |
| Perception of Goat Milk Production and Consumption in Rural, Peri-Urban and Urban Areas of Oyo State, Nigeria<br><i>Ibaze, G. A., Olorunnisomo, O. A. and A. A. Ladele</i>                                                   |                          | 103  |

# JOURNAL OF APPLIED AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

| Contents                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Volume 5, Number 2, 2013 | Page       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------|
| <b>Agricultural Engineering</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                          | <b>109</b> |
| Analysis of Pneumatic Cleaning of Cowpea<br><i>Aderinlewo, A. A. and A. O. Raji</i>                                                                                                                                                                              |                          | 111        |
| An Appraisal of a Tillage Equipment for Small Holder Farming in South West of Nigeria<br><i>Adisa, A. F., Vaughan, I. O., Aderinlewo, A. A., and P. O. O. Dada</i>                                                                                               |                          | 117        |
| <b>Animal Production</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                          | <b>125</b> |
| Haematology and Serum-Chemistry of Growing Pullets and Layers Fed Raw and Treated Groundnut Husk Meal Based Diets<br><i>Bello, K. O. and D. Erubetina</i>                                                                                                        |                          | 127        |
| Comparative Egg Quality Traits of Four Poultry Species<br><i>Orunmuyi, M., Okezie, O. I., Bawa, G. S., Ojo, O. A. and T. S. Olugbemi</i>                                                                                                                         |                          | 141        |
| <b>Crop Production and Soil Science</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                          | <b>147</b> |
| Effects of Different Plant Population Densities on Agronomic Performance and Quality Profile of High-Lysine Hybrids Maize ( <i>Zea mays</i> ) in Krasnodar Region of Russia<br><i>Sakariyawo, O. S., Rodachiskaya, L. V., Yakovlev, E. B. and A. A. Oyekanmi</i> |                          | 149        |
| Effect of Native Cassava Starch Hydrogel Amended Soil on Maize ( <i>Zea mays</i> L.) Performance<br><i>Ekebafé, L. O., Ogbeifun, D. E. and F. E. Okieimen</i>                                                                                                    |                          | 161        |
| Extraction and Characterization of Chemical Compounds in <i>Coelaenomenodera elaeidis</i> Mlk. (Coleoptera: Chrysomelidae)<br><i>Zhang, A., Aisagbonhi, C. I., Anikwe, J., Obibuzor, J. U., Aneni, T. I. and C. O. Ogbebor</i>                                   |                          | 169        |
| Performance of Sweet Orange ( <i>Citrus Sinensis</i> (L.) Osbeck) Varieties in Ibadan, Derived Savannah Zone of South-Western Nigeria<br><i>Olaniyan, A. A., Babalola, S. O., Amih, A. C. and A. J. Kolade</i>                                                   |                          | 175        |
| Inter Cropping Sugarcane ( <i>Saccharium officinarum</i> L.) with Annual Food Crops at Badeggi Southern Guinea Savannah of Nigeria<br><i>Gana, A. K.</i>                                                                                                         |                          | 185        |
| Comparative Analysis of Agronomic Performance and Seed Morphometric Traits of Maize ( <i>Zea mays</i> L.) Seed From Varied Sources<br><i>Adetumbi, J. A., Daniel, I. O. and S. A. Olakojo</i>                                                                    |                          | 193        |

# JOURNAL OF APPLIED AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

| Contents                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Volume 5, Number 2, 2013 | Page |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------|
| Evaluation of the Heavy Metals Remediation Potential of Cashew ( <i>Anacardium occidentale</i> ) on Edta-Applied Acidic and Basic Soils<br>Azam, J. O., Yang, O. M., Basari, M. A. and G. T. Salaudeen                                                                                                                  |                          | 205  |
| Evaluation of Herbicides on Weed Control, Performance and Profitability of Onion ( <i>Allium cepa</i> ) in the Forest Zone of Nigeria<br>Iwalade, U., Olanrewaju, O. J., Ajide, B. T. and B. A. Mahmoud                                                                                                                 |                          | 217  |
| Effects of Poultry Manure Rates and Population Density on Productivity of Fluted Pumpkin ( <i>Telfairia occidentalis</i> Hook. F.) on a Sandy Soil<br>Sitiyem, J. O.                                                                                                                                                    |                          | 223  |
| Variations in Chemical Properties of Soils from Shale Parent Material in South Western Nigeria<br>Obi, J. C., Akintola, G. E. and P. I. Ogbon                                                                                                                                                                           |                          | 229  |
| Vegetative and Reproductive Growth of Upland Nerica Rice ( <i>Oryza sativa</i> ) Varieties as Affected by Types and Rates of Application of Organic Manure<br>Oyekunmi, A. A., Bakare, O. O., Okeleye, K. A., Adejumo, C. O., Shitta, T. A., Salamiyemi, O. S., Aderibigbe, S. G., Okunji, C. J., and D. A. C. Akintade |                          | 241  |
| Comparative Evaluation of Response of Lowland NERICA® Rice and Improved <i>Oryza sativa</i> Rice to Nitrogen and Phosphorus Rates in Moist Savanna of West Africa<br>Aderibigbe, S. G., Okunji, C. J., Okeleye, K. A., Odeh, S. O., Oyekunmi, A. A., Bodunde, G., Ajayi, O. and F. Nwileze                              |                          | 251  |
| Fungi Pathogens and Total Aflatoxin Contents in Sesame ( <i>Sesamum indicum</i> L.) Seeds Marketed in Abuja, Nigeria<br>Anjorin, S. T., Onijack, C. G. and S. C. Ugo                                                                                                                                                    |                          | 263  |
| Response of Vegetable Cowpea ( <i>Vigna unguiculata</i> (L.) Walp) to Planting Density and Variety in a Humid Zone of Southeastern Nigeria<br>Mawole, C. O., Ndakue, O. O., Akpan, A. U. and P. I. Oluocha                                                                                                              |                          | 273  |
| Productivity of Cucumber in Semi-Arid Savannahs of Nigeria as Affected by Organic Fertilizer<br>Dandata, I. J. and F. E. Babatunde                                                                                                                                                                                      |                          | 283  |
| Review Paper                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                          | 289  |
| Agricultural Innovation Networks: Forms and Appropriate Governance<br>Ukuru, R. U.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                          | 291  |

## FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH JOB PERFORMANCE OF EXTENSION AGENTS IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

The study investigated role perception, job satisfaction and motivation as factors associated with job performance of extension agents in Kwara State, Nigeria. A complete sampling of all the extension agents of the Kwara State Agricultural Development Project (KWADP) produced the 66 respondents of the study. Data were obtained by the use of a structured questionnaire and was subjected to descriptive statistics, specifically, frequencies, percentages, and means. A linear regression model was used to investigate relationship between variables. Three point Likert-type scales were employed in ascertaining perception on roles, job satisfaction and job motivation among the respondents. The respondents were found to be predominantly male (79.8%), with a mean age of 49 years. About 80% of the respondents had tertiary education and rural background. The study revealed that majority of the respondents (78.8%) considered input supply to farmers as their most important role. Age and childhood background were significantly related to job performance at 1% level of significance with t-values of 7.649 and 7.488, respectively. The extension agents were most satisfied with the level of job security they had and their supervisor and organization's interest in their welfare. Salary/allowances and prospects of promotion were the most important motivational factors of the extension agents. The study recommended continuous training of the extension agents on their role expectations. It also suggested that age be considered in future recruitment exercises of the Kwara State ADP.

**Keywords:** Job Performance, Role Perception, Job Satisfaction, Motivation, Extension Agents

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### INTRODUCTION

Agriculture remains the mainstay of the Nigerian economy, providing food, shelter, clothing and employment. The need for a renewed focus on agriculture stems from the FAO (2010) report that one out of every seven persons in the world is hungry with majority of the world's hungry living in developing countries. Rural areas account for three out of every four persons living on less than \$1.25 a day while 50% of hungry people are farming families that depend on agriculture and related activities for livelihood (HDR, 2008; FAO, 2012).

Although FMARD (2010) reported that agriculture contributed 42% of the total GDP of Nigeria in 2007, the human and natural resources endowment of the country suggest that this is a far cry from the potentials that agriculture holds for the country's economic development.

Under-investment in new technology and low level of adoption of existing technology are part contributors to the mixed performance and poor growth of agriculture in Nigeria (World Bank, 2005). The existence of significant correlation between extension and yield has been upheld by several studies

(Evenson and Bravo-Olivera, 1994; Rivera, 2001). The Nigerian agriculture, in particular, is dominated by small-scale farmers who are mostly illiterate, places enormous burden on the country and calls for an efficient and effective agricultural extension system. Agricultural extension in Nigeria is largely public, administered by the State Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs) under the supervision of the State Ministries of Agriculture. By design, the ADPs are meant to improve the agricultural productivity, income and general well being of the farmers (Maduekwe and Obibuaku, 1991). Referred to by Ifenkwe (2012) as the nerve centre of the extension organization, extension agents are important to, and determine, to a large extent, the level of success in any extension effort. Ekunankana and Anyanwu (2007) noted that the job performance of the field extension workers in the ADPs was of great concern to agricultural administrators, policy makers and development practitioners in Nigeria.

Closely related, role perception, job satisfaction and motivation are factors that greatly influence job performance of extension workers (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2008). According to Robbin (2005), perception, which is an awareness or understanding unique to each individual, is an important factor that shapes peoples behavior and attitude. An extension officer who has failed to interpret his or her role correctly, therefore, risks non-performance or under-performance as the case may be. SHRM (2009) reported that employees who are satisfied with their jobs are generally more committed, productive and more likely to stay on the job. Motivation, a pro-active human resource management strategy, is imperative in ensuring job satisfaction (Oloruntimehin and Ajayi, 2003).

The state of the Nigerian agricultural sector and the reported poor performance of

agricultural extension under the ADPs, particularly since the withdrawal of the World Bank financing, demand a critical look at the performance of the key resource of the system (extension agents) (Qamar, 2011). The following research questions were answered by the study: How do extension agents perceive their job roles? What are the factors of job satisfaction among the extension agents? Which socio-economic factors are associated with job performance? and, What factors motivate the extension agents?

#### Objectives of the study

The study investigated factors associated with job performance among extension agents in Kwara State. Specifically, the study: evaluated extension agents perception of their job roles; investigated the factors of job satisfaction among the extension agents; ascertained the socio-economic characteristics associated with job performance; and examined the factors that motivate the extension agents.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

#### The study area

The study was conducted in Kwara State, Nigeria. Created in 1967, the state consists of sixteen local government areas grouped into four agro-ecological zones. Agriculture is the major economic activity of the state with both cash and food crops grown in appreciable quantity. The primary ethnic group in the state is Yoruba with others being Nupe, Fulani and Bariba.

#### Sampling design

Questionnaires were administered on all sixty-nine (69) extension agents of the Kwara State ADP; however, only sixty-six (66) were returned and this formed the basis of the analysis.

## Factors Associated with Job Performance of Extension Agents

### Data collection and analytical tools

Data were obtained by the use of a structured and pretested questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, specifically, frequencies, percentages and means were employed in analyzing the data collected. The linear regression model was used to ascertain the relationship between selected socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and their job performances.

### Measurement of variables

Respondents were required to indicate the extent to which they considered different activities to be their roles as extension agents. Their perception of the roles was then measured using a three point Likert - type scale rated as;

No extent = 1, great extent = 2, greater extent = 3

The extent to which respondents were satisfied with different aspects of their job was measured using a three point Likert - type scale rated as;

No extent = 1, great extent = 2, greater extent = 3

The self perceived job performance of the respondents was obtained through their responses to specific statements on level of achievements on 10 key responsibilities handled by them. A three point Likert-type scale was employed and rated as follows;

Not satisfactory = 1, fairly satisfactory = 2 and highly satisfactory = 3

The total mean score was calculated and taken as the level of job performance of each respondent.

The relationship between selected socio-economic characteristics of the respondents

and their level of performance was determined using the linear regression model

The linear form of the regression model was expressed in the implicit form as follows;

$$Y = f(X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4, X_5, X_6, U)$$

Where Y = Job performance (Total mean score)

X<sub>1</sub> = Age (Years)

X<sub>2</sub> = Marital status (1 if married, 2 otherwise)

X<sub>3</sub> = Gender (1 for male, 0 for female)

X<sub>4</sub> = Educational background (1 = Primary, 2 = Secondary, 3 = Tertiary, 4 = Adult education, 5 =

Training institute)

X<sub>5</sub> = Experience (Years)

X<sub>6</sub> = Childhood background

U = Error term.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic characteristics of extension agents

Selected socio-economic characteristics of the respondents are as presented in Table 1. With a mean age of approximately 49 years the extension agents of the Kwara State ADP were predominantly middle aged and it is expected that they were capable of the agility and versatility required in extension work. Table 1 also reveal that in spite of the important role of women in agriculture (UN, 1996; I/AO, 2011), only 21.3% of the extension workers were female. This may possibly affect the level of extension services provided to women farmers in Kwara State. More than two thirds of the extension agents were married and 80.3% had tertiary education. The remaining 19.7% attended training institutes. Majority of the extension agents (74.7%) had over 10 years of work experience. This is likely to have a good impact on their performance and response to research questions given the wealth of

experience which they might have acquired over time. The fact that 83.3% of the extension agents had rural childhood is likely to enhance their understanding of the mindset of their clientele and also of the peculiarities of rural communities.

#### Role perception among respondents

All the activities listed in Table 2 were considered by the respondents as their job roles. Making arrangement for input supply to farmers, with a mean score of 2.79 was rated the highest by the majority in spite of the fact that this is more of a service role. Processing and recovery of loans ranked the lowest with a mean score of 2.27. Although teaching and educating farmers is a major function of extension agents, communicating new ideas and conducting Management Plot

Adaptive Technology (MIPAT) were ranked average with modal frequencies of 54.5% and 66.7% respectively. The fact that input supply was perceived more important than the core agricultural extension responsibilities of technology transfer suggests that the extension agents had not correctly prioritized their roles and were likely to dissipate more energy, time and other resources in input supply at the expense of technology transfer and other advisory services. This has negative implications for the effectiveness of extension and needs to be addressed.

Job satisfaction among extension agents in Kwara State

Table 3 reveals that with mean score of 2.08 in both, the respondents were most satisfied

Table 1: Socio- economic characteristics of respondents

| Socio-economic characteristics   | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| <b>Age</b>                       |           |            |
| ≤ 40                             | 5         | 7.6        |
| 41 - 50                          | 34        | 51.5       |
| 51 - 60                          | 19        | 28.8       |
| >60                              | 8         | 12.1       |
| Total                            | 66        | 100        |
| <b>Gender</b>                    |           |            |
| Male                             | 52        | 78.8       |
| Female                           | 14        | 21.2       |
| Total                            | 66        | 100        |
| <b>Marital status</b>            |           |            |
| Single                           | 16        | 24.2       |
| Married                          | 50        | 75.8       |
| Total                            | 66        | 100        |
| <b>Educational qualification</b> |           |            |
| Tertiary                         | 53        | 80.3       |
| Training institutes              | 13        | 19.7       |
| Total                            | 66        | 100        |
| <b>Working experience</b>        |           |            |
| ≤ 10                             | 17        | 25.8       |
| 11-20                            | 36        | 54.5       |
| 21-30                            | 12        | 18.2       |
| >30                              | 1         | 1.5        |
| Total                            | 66        | 100        |
| <b>Childhood background</b>      |           |            |
| Rural                            | 55        | 83.3       |
| Urban                            | 11        | 16.7       |
| Total                            | 66        | 100        |

Source: Field Survey, 2010

# Factors Associated with Job Performance of Extension Agents

with the interest shown in them by their supervisors and the feeling of job security they enjoy on the job. This is similar to the findings of McCaslin and Mwangi (1994). In fact, all the respondents were satisfied, to a great extent, with the job. Seventy percent of the respondents were satisfied with the level of training and the criteria for selection for training. The level of cooperation received

from co-agents (1.32) and peoples' perceptions of extension agents (1.12) had scores of below average (1.5) and were the areas of least satisfaction among the extension agents. The low mean score on cooperation received from co-agents is suggestive of a low level of team spirit, team work and networking among extension agents. People's perception of extension

Table 2: Distribution of respondents based on role perception

| Statements summary                                        | Percentage   |                 |                   | Mean Rank    |                 |                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|
|                                                           | No<br>extent | Great<br>extent | Greater<br>extent | No<br>extent | Great<br>extent | Greater<br>extent |
| Studying village situations and learning its problems     | -            | 37.9            | 62.1              | 2.62         | 5               |                   |
| Communicating new ideas to farmers                        | -            | 54.5            | 45.5              | 2.45         | 6               |                   |
| Preparing schedule for extension activities               | -            | 25.8            | 74.2              | 2.74         | 2               |                   |
| Feeding back farm problems to researchers and supervisors | -            | 31.8            | 68.2              | 2.68         | 3               |                   |
| Initiating and promoting leadership                       | -            | 68.2            | 31.8              | 2.32         | 8               |                   |
| Conducting MPAT on farmer's plot                          | -            | 66.7            | 33.3              | 2.35         | 7               |                   |
| Organizing people for extension activities                | -            | 68.2            | 31.8              | 2.32         | 8               |                   |
| Securing markets for farmers                              | -            | 69.7            | 30.3              | 2.30         | 11              |                   |
| Advising farmers on farm problems                         | -            | 31.8            | 68.2              | 2.68         | 3               |                   |
| Organizing farmers into cooperative societies             | -            | 68.2            | 31.8              | 2.32         | 8               |                   |
| Processing and recovery of loans from farmers             | -            | 72.7            | 27.3              | 2.27         | 12              |                   |
| Making arrangement for input supply to farmers            | -            | 21.2            | 78.8              | 2.79         | 1               |                   |

Source: Field survey, 2010

Table 3: Distribution of respondents based on factors of job satisfaction

| Statements summary                                       | Percentage   |                 |                   | Mean Rank    |                 |                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|
|                                                          | No<br>extent | Great<br>extent | Greater<br>extent | No<br>extent | Great<br>extent | Greater<br>extent |
| Training farmers gives the agent job satisfaction        | 25.8         | 66.7            | 7.6               | 1.82         | 5               |                   |
| Cooperation received from co-agents satisfy the agents   | 69.7         | 28.8            | 1.5               | 1.32         | 11              |                   |
| The time I spend at work are the ones I enjoy most       | 21.2         | 78.8            | -                 | 1.79         | 6               |                   |
| The interest shown by my supervisor motivates me         | 12.1         | 68.2            | 19.7              | 2.08         | 1               |                   |
| The number of farmers am expected to visit is ok         | 28.8         | 71.2            | -                 | 1.71         | 8               |                   |
| People's perception about agents job satisfy the agents  | 87.9         | 12.1            | -                 | 1.12         | 12              |                   |
| I feel secured on my job                                 | -            | 92.4            | 7.6               | 2.08         | 1               |                   |
| Organization concern for staff welfare satisfy the agent | 45.5         | 54.5            | -                 | 1.55         | 10              |                   |
| Available transport facilities ease agents work          | 16.7         | 83.3            | -                 | 1.85         | 4               |                   |
| Pay and allowance satisfy the agent                      | 13.6         | 86.4            | -                 | 1.86         | 3               |                   |
| I am ok with the criteria used for selection             | 28.8         | 71.2            | -                 | 1.71         | 8               |                   |
| Criteria used for selection to in-service training is ok | 22.7         | 77.3            | -                 | 1.77         | 7               |                   |

Source: Field survey, 2010

agents, with the lowest mean score of 1.12 points to a low self esteem among the agents and this is likely to have a negative impact on their performance on the job.

Relationship between selected socio-economic characteristics and job performance

Table 4 shows that age and childhood background were found to be significant and related to job performance at 1% with t-values of 7.649 and 7.488, respectively. The inverse nature of the relationship between age of respondent and their job performance indicates that job performance will decline with increase in age. This finding is at variance with that of Ifenlwe (2012) in a similar study carried out on extension officers in Abia State, Nigeria, in which age was positively related to job performance. Respondents with rural background also had

a significantly higher level of performance than those from the urban background. A similar finding was reported by Ifenlwe (2012). This is likely due to their expected higher understanding of the farmers and their activities by virtue of their familiarity with the rural environment.

#### Motivating factors of extension agents

As shown in Table 5, 89.4% of the respondents were motivated by increased salary and this factor ranked the highest with a mean score of 2.89. Promotion prospect, recognition, training, transport and better housing arrangements were also indicated as motivational factors. Job evaluation was, however, not well accepted as a factor in the motivation of the respondents as only 31.9% of the respondents considered it a motivational factor.

Table 4: Relationship between selected socio-economic characteristics and job performance

| Factors              | B      | Stand E | t-value | Remark |
|----------------------|--------|---------|---------|--------|
| Age                  | -0.545 | 0.071   | 7.649   | S      |
| Marital Status       | 0.022  | 0.126   | -0.392  | NS     |
| Gender               | -0.066 | 0.160   | -0.411  | NS     |
| Educational level    | 0.029  | 0.068   | -0.432  | NS     |
| Working experience   | 0.029  | 0.117   | -0.251  | NS     |
| Childhood Background | 0.551  | 0.070   | 7.488   | S      |

Source: Field survey, 2012

Table 5: Distribution of respondents based on motivating factors

| Statements summary                                                 | Percentage |              |                | Mean | Rank |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------|----------------|------|------|
|                                                                    | No         | Great extent | Greater extent |      |      |
| An increased salary motivates me                                   | -          | 10.6         | 89.4           | 2.89 | 1    |
| A better promotion prospect motivates me                           | -          | 19.7         | 80.3           | 2.80 | 2    |
| I am more motivated towards my work if I am given further training | -          | 15.2         | 84.6           | 2.42 | 6    |
| Annual leave allowance contribute to my job motivation             | -          | 15.2         | 84.7           | 2.88 | 3    |
| Recognition of my achievements increases my performance            | 19.7       | 12.1         | 68.2           | 2.48 | 5    |
| Prizes for good performance increases my desire to excel           | 12.1       | 18.2         | 69.7           | 2.52 | 4    |
| A better transport facility will motivate me                       | 9.1        | 81.8         | 9.1            | 2.00 | 8    |
| Good housing and allowance will motivate me to work harder         | 22.7       | 18.2         | 59.1           | 2.30 | 7    |
| Evaluating me on my work objectives lower my motivation            | 68.2       | 25.8         | 6.1            | 1.38 | 9    |

Source: Field survey, 2010

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that agricultural extension agents of the Kwara State ADP have a good understanding of the roles expected of them as extension agents. However, there were some challenges as to prioritizing these roles. Job security and the interest shown in extension agents by their supervisors were the factors that gave the extension agents the most satisfaction on their job. Age and childhood background were the socio- economic factors which showed significant levels of relationship with the extension agents job performance. Increased salary and prospect of promotion were the most important factors that motivated the extension agents to improved performance.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

There is the need to train extension officers of the Kwara State ADP on prioritizing their job roles.

Team spirit and networking should be encouraged among extension agents through training workshops.

The employment of younger and more versatile employees as extension agents to take over from the older once presently in service should be explored.

Regular payment of allowances and steady promotion of extension agents as at when due should be ensured.

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